

Chinatown

Heritage

5C JAN 9 - 1956

Beneficial

The pioneer Chinese who came to Oakland were men with a vision.

Most of the Chinese originally

came to "Gum Shan" (America) for the gold they expected, and planned to return to their homeland.

The ~~Oakland~~ Chinese, however, was determined to become a citizen of the country.

The descendants and inheritors of the heritage of these early-day Chinese now are announcing plans for a multi-million-dollar redevelopment project of the ~~Chinatown~~ started almost a century ago.

The ~~Oakland~~ Chinese made frequent trips to "Dai Fow" (San Francisco) but gladly returned here, where they were not tied to the superstitions across the bay.

Before 1906 the estimated Chinese population in Oakland was less than a thousand. But the Chinese with his long queue and his Oriental costume was a familiar sight on the streets.

So few decided to settle here that they became a class apart known as "men from Oakland."

10,000 BY 1960

But the 1906 San Francisco fire and earthquake brought hundreds more to the Oakland Chinese community. By 1910 almost 2,500 Chinese were living in the Eastbay. In 1960 it was estimated that there were 10,000 in Alameda County.

Before the turn of the century, Oakland kept moving the Chinese.

About 1867 the official Chinatown was the east side of Telegraph between 16th and 17th Sts. One night a coal oil lamp exploded and the whole district went up in flames.

The next move was to San Pablo Road between 19th and 20th Streets.

MORE MOVING

In this account of Oakland's

MORE MOVING

In his account of Oakland's early Chinese, Edward W. Chew wrote that there were several other moves before the center was established at 8th and Webster Streets.

This area is part of the 30-block section aimed for the Chinatown renewal project.

It is planned to combine the characteristics of a cultural and community service with shopping and business activities and housing.

"The old and new will . . . provide a contemporary environment as well as meaningful symbols of a traditional Chinese city," says the re-development project brochure.

The Madison Square area centering around Madison Square Park is proposed as a housing area with rehabilitated apartments and townhouses.

BART HEADQUARTERS

The permanent headquarters of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District will occupy the present site of Madison Square park with a new park to be relocated one block west.

Commercial businesses, shops, cafes and centers will serve the residential sections, BART and the upcoming Peralta Junior College with imaginative planning to include foot bridges, an elevated Chinese water garden and pagoda-type structures.

The plan, prepared by Warren W. Jones and Associates and allied firms, says "the false historical . . . will be avoided in favor of an authentic presentation of the culturally significant past in a progressive setting."

"The men from Oakland" laid a better foundation than they knew.

Chinatown Facelift

1 TR 5C JAN 9 - 1966

By ELINOR HAYES

Chinese leaders today are announcing an exciting \$35 million plus project for redevelopment of a 30-block area of Oakland's Chinatown into a model community like none other in the United States.

After four years in the planning stage, the Oakland Chinatown Redevelopment Project leaders today are summoning some 600-800 Chinese-American citizens, city officials and community leaders to the Chinese Community Center at 316 9th St. at 2:30 p.m.

There they will hear Chairman Edward B. Wong announce plans to rebuild Chinatown "as a magnificent center for Chinese life and culture."

VISION, MONEY

Oakland Redevelopment Agency officials, who have cooperated, note that the seed for this project, the impetus and planning came from the Chinese themselves.

They have backed their dream with their vision and money.

"This is the people telling us what they want and helping to finance it," said John B. Williams, executive director of the redevelopment agency.

The Oakland Chinatown Redevelopment Project committee of 15 raised \$10,000 from various sources, limited to a top of \$250,

A handsome brochure prepared by the allied firms of Jones and Associates, Okamoto-Liskamnn, Ribera & Sue and Development Research Associates sets forth this prospectus:

The new Oakland Chinatown will contain shops, plazas, restaurants, a theater and offices, new housing for the elderly, single people, newcomers from Asia and families.

QUIET WALKWAYS

"Streets will be improved, there will be a new emphasis on safe, attractive and quiet walkways for pedestrians and open spaces for sitting outdoors enjoying the atmosphere of a small Chinese city."

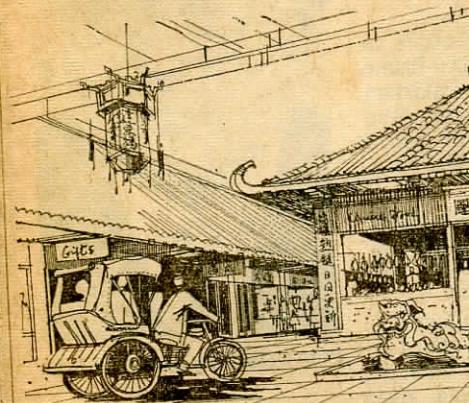
It notes that there will be access to two Bay Area Rapid Transit stations. There will be shops, commercial businesses, offices.

Also envisioned are a "village street," food stores, family associations, churches, antique and art shops and Chinese gardens.

It is proposed that the blighted and deteriorated buildings be removed and those that can be incorporated into the plan be rehabilitated.

Other races — Caucasians and Japanese, for instance — will be invited to join.

The brochure anticipates that



ARCHITECT'S SKETCH OF PRO

Part of ambitious project ann

The city council will hold a special meeting Thursday at 9 a.m. to hear the proposal.

Then the Chinese committee will ask the council to direct the planning commission and redevelopment agency to conduct further studies and submit an application to the federal government for a federally assisted Chinatown Redevelopment Project.

It is estimated that there will be \$30 million in private development.

Preliminary estimates from the redevelopment agency indicate a gross project cost of \$8,878,000.

They anticipate a return of \$4.5 million from the sale of land to private developers, leaving a net project cost of \$4.8 million.

ONE-FOURTH FOR CITY

It is expected that the city will pay one-quarter of this cost, with the federal government picking up the remaining three-quarters.

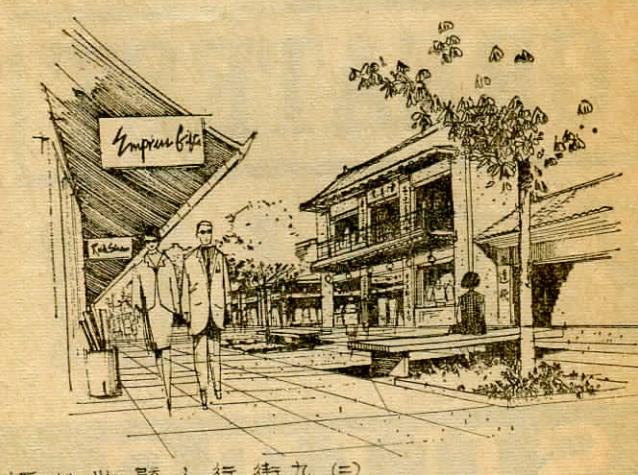
Officials presume that the city will not have to put out any cash, based on credits of public improvements and the new BART station at Oak Street.

Wong, an accountant with his own Oakland firm, as early as 1961 emphasized, "This project has the support of the entire Chinese community. Oakland's Chinese are the most progressive in the United States."

Asked then whether it could be financed he said, "When Chinese don't have money for anything else, they have it for real estate."

In reporting to his people today, Wong will recall the long planning from which the project has been developed by leaders of the Oakland Chinatown Redevelopment Project aided by City of Oakland personnel and the Oakland Redevelopment Agency.

His presentation says: "Our first step was to sponsor



PEDESTRIAN SHOPPING AREA PART OF PROJECT

Revitalization of Oakland's Chinatown proposed.

with which last April they contracted with Warren W. Jones and Associates, city and regional planners, and other firms to produce the ideal plan.

It is regarded as a stepping stone to the revitalization and renewal of downtown Chinatown.

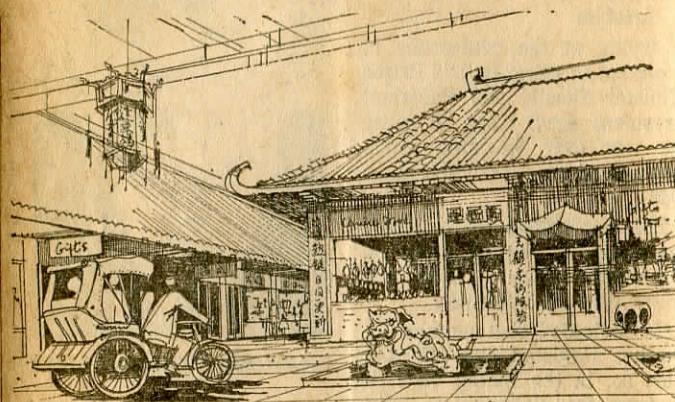
The 30-block area encompasses the area from Washington to Madison Streets and from 6th to 11th Sts. Heart of the project will be the Chinese Cultural Center.

several years will elapse before tangible changes and improvements in the area can take place, other than those by BART or individual property owners.

But already Chinese citizens have pledged \$100,000 to the project.

It will be presented tomorrow at 4 p.m. in the City Hall to a joint meeting of the city planning commission, redevelopment agency and redevelopment liaison committee of the Oakland City council.

Facelift Urged



ARCHITECT'S SKETCH OF PROPOSED STREET

Part of ambitious project announced today

The city council will hold a special meeting Thursday at 9 a.m. to hear the proposal. The plans which are being presented to you today.

"Our second step is now well under way. To date \$100,000 has been pledged by members of the Chinese community as the necessary seed money to get this project under way.

"This means that the Chinese community has the faith, vision

It is estimated that there will be \$30 million in private development.

Preliminary estimates from

and resources to rebuild Chinatown as proposed.

"Our third step, after today, is to present our plans for Chinatown to the city planning commission, the redevelopment agency and the city council for review and approval.

"If approved—and we believe these plans warrant official approval—we will secure the necessary financing to carry the project to completion in cooperation with the city as our joint-venturer in a Chinatown redevelopment."

The executive committee of the Chinatown project which Wong heads also includes Pak Hoy Wong, vice chairman; Dr. Raymond L. Eng, coordinator; Hon Chew, secretary; Kic Ming Joe, assistant secretary; Choy Lee, treasurer; Benny Chin, assistant treasurer; Milton Shoong and Andrew Lowe, advisers; Dr. Clinton W. Lee, Henry Szlo, the Rev. Edward Lee, Dr. Lester C. Lee, Philip W. Ong and Dr. Jacob Y. Yee.

Chinatown: Past, Future

FEB 12 1967

By HERMAN WONG

Oakland's Chinese - Americans are embarking on the Year of the Ram with — to put it mildly — mixed feelings.

As a group, they are pushing as hard as anyone to collect the rewards of the westerners' middle-class way of life from bucket-seated motorizing to split-level suburbia.

But they keep looking back to their heritage — the elderly with deep sadness, the young adults with unshakable guilt, and the teen-agers frequently with brash disdain.

The Year of the Ram (or Sheep) may be No. 4665 in the Chinese lunar calendar, complete with rounds of dinners, exchanges of good luck symbols and honoring of family ancestors that began last Thursday.

But overshadowing any observances is the fact that this is also the western year of 1967, and the dilemma of an

ethnic group such as the Chinese-Americans is stronger than ever before.

"I'm ashamed to say it," said an attractive 32-year-old Chinese-American mother of three, "but my husband and I don't speak Chinese at home, nor do we expect our children to. Oh, I do speak Chinese with my mother, but that's the only time now."

Commented a 16-year-old boy, who sports the now fashionable shaggy haircut look:

"It's kind of a joke, you know, about Chinese things and all that. I guess we kids are becoming more and more pure Americans, huh?"

That much - lauded melting pot of America doesn't always produce a nice bubbly flow. Cultures, such as those of the Chinese, often get caught on a collision course with the "dominant" western way of life.

A project that somehow manages to take all this in ac-

count and offer possible solutions is sure to earn a lot of attention, both in being showered with praise and punctured by criticism.

The Oakland Chinatown Redevelopment Project brings with it impressive credentials. It directly affects the lives of the estimated 12,000 Chinese-Americans in Oakland and some 60,000 in the Bay Area.

It won the official blessings of the city fathers a year ago and has made its debut in the toughest role of all — as an applicant for federal funds for planning studies.

Originally the 30-block Chinatown project was combined with an "old city" area from Chinatown west to Brush St. Proposed total cost was \$34 million.

But what bowled over city fathers was the self-help quality of the project. "It was," summed up a pleased John B. Williams, director of the Oakland Redevelopment Agency,

"the case of the people telling US what they want—and offering their own money to get things rolling."

The Chinatown group, before action by the city council and a g e n c y, had collected \$10,000 from 70 donors (at a \$250 each maximum) to finance a preliminary study a n d recommendations. In place of a deteriorating area the group proposed a cultural and community center with shopping, businesses and housing (including provision for older immigrants).

The local group, with one eye on the crowded conditions of San Francisco's Chinatown and another on the growing numbers of new immigrants

Continued Page B, Col. 1

and another trying to really follow up and reach these people," said Ong.

Coordination within the Chinese community must cut through — or be swallowed up by — layers of business and

Continued from Page 1

and young families seeking homes sees the Oakland Chinatown in a new role.

"As far as we can tell there is no other community project like this, either in the self-help aspect or in the powerful emphasis on preserving the culture," said Varts Erickson, Redevelopment Agency liaison with the Chinese community.

"This goes beyond commercial changes, and goes right to the heart of a community. It is not meant to be flashy, but is to have dignity and show what an ethnic group is really like."

The hoped-for new structures, plazas and other facilities stemming from the existing area around 8th and Webster Streets would crown the long fight of a vigorous group headed by Edward B. Wong, who has an insurance and accountancy firm in Chinatown.

Wong is chairman of the Chinatown project's executive committee. He speaks warmly of the days when the sense of community was stronger in the Chinatown that flourished near the Estuary in pre-Nimitz Freeway days.

He was born in San Francisco after the great earthquake and fire. His family was among the thousands of Chinese who made the exodus to Oakland, Sacramento and other Northern California areas, breaking the San Francisco concentration for the first time.

"The Chinese in Oakland were always a little different," said Wong. "We never clung to our Chinatown the way they do in San Francisco and we were moving out to other residential areas even back in the 1920's."

But the death of a Chinatown here would be a great tragedy to men like Ed Wong.

His reason? Concern for the younger generation, the same group that often questions or scoffs most at old customs.

"When my father immigrated to the United States, that took guts to come so far and to start a whole new life," said Wong. "I don't think I could do what he did. And he gave me an opportunity to grow up in this country and with the advantages that he and others

of his generation worked to win for us."

There was a time, recalls Wong in a fleetingly told but significant remark, when his father wore the traditional Chinese queue. "There were many times when people used to pull his hair," he says.

But Chinese - Americans today command a respect unsurpassed by any other so-called minority group, bolstered by such measures as extremely low incidences of juvenile delinquency and welfare cases.

In Oakland last year less than one per cent of the cases processed by the police juvenile division were Chinese-Americans. In the experience of Alameda County Welfare staffers, virtually no Chinese-Americans are placed on the welfare rolls.)

"What then do we leave our children?" asked Wong. "Better care? Nicer TV sets? Iish gifts? These are pretty things, vain things. I'm not saying these are absolutely bad things, for it is what we're all seeking in bettering ourselves.

"But it isn't enough. If it is, then we might as well close up shop as parents."

Ed Wong scowled and then beared down on the pet theme he has presented over and over to city officials and citizens' groups.

"We have a magnificent heritage, but it is being lost more each year. Our Chinatown is dying. But it is THESE things that we can leave for our children, and for this great country.

"If we build a Chinatown that is alive and exciting — and means something — then we can win back the younger generation to their own past."

But since the fanfare of a year ago, the Chinatown project has been bound up in the federal red tape, and many Chinese - Americans are wondering if the project is moving — or even off the ground.

In an attempt to better reach the federal pursestrings, the Chinatown (and old city) project has been combined with the Peralta College project in a complicated General Neighborhood Renewal Area approach. In short the Chinatown plan is now part of a 500-acre package in a

fresh application for \$325,000 in planning funds.

All that many Chinatown merchants know is that the project seems at a standstill or, at best, a long - distance endeavor. "I guess it is a good idea," said an immigrant in his 50's who operates a laundry. "But I may be too old to enjoy it when it is completed."

Said Helen Woo, hostess at one of the eight restaurants in Oakland Chinatown:

"It isn't the idea of the project that bothers us — my gosh, this is progress and it's a good thing.

"But what's going to happen to the people who live here and have their stores here? Where are we going to go? Sure we hear talk that everything's going to be okay, but you still get that feeling of uncertainty.

"You can talk all you want about the future. But what about — the now?"

Most of the 75 households displaced by Bay Area Rapid Transit District in the 9th and Oak Streets area moved to East Oakland. BART is building its Lake Merritt Station and relocating a park in the area.

But, said Helen Woo of the moving of those families, "there was a lot of heartbreak. How do you replace that?"

Aware of the dangers of inertia in redevelopment, particularly in the processing of federal funds, Chinatown projects leaders have raised their contribution to \$15,000 and will undertake further studies — with or without the federal government's help.

One of the leaders, the Rev. Frank G. Mar, pastor of the Chinese Presbyterian Church

and member of the Oakland Economic Development Council, recognizes the chief immediate task is closing the communications gap within the Chinese community. "We are working to achieve closer ties and fuller involvement, but it takes time and help," said the Rev. Mr. Mar.

George E. Ong, an insurance broker and realtor in Chinatown, is outspoken in his concern about "just how many of us are really involved in the project."

"It is one thing to send out notices to all the property owners about some meeting, and another thing to really follow up and reach these people," said Ong.

Coordination within the Chinese community must cut through — or be swallowed up by — layers of business and family association factions. Area property owners were especially vocal in protests about lack of communications during the city council hearing.

But, to another project pioneer, Dr. Raymond L. Eng, Oakland optometrist, the final goal is the pulling force. "We're not asking our children to live in the past, but in their own future," said Dr. Eng. "We're asking them to evaluate what is the best of both cultures and to retain those features."

So it all comes back to youths like Steven Hom, 14-year-old pupil at Westlake Junior High School, who is one of those who shies away from the idea of having to attend Cantonese language classes.

But ask him how does it "feel" to be a Chinese - American. "I'm proud," he said, "to be a Chinese . . . period."

\$25 Million

JUL 12 1967

Oakland has been given a \$25 million "charge account" for redevelopment in the Peralta-Chinatown area.

The sum—and it's a rough estimate—is the amount Washington will match on a three-to-one basis for local spending on projects in the area.

It works this way: some \$6 million in Bay Area Rapid Transit construction can be used to obtain local credits. The sum entitles Oakland to around \$18 million in federal aid for the area. Other local credits total \$2.5 million, bringing the federal share available to some \$25.5 million.

The "charge account" is a consequence of federal approval of a General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (GNRP) covering the area from Castro Street to 14th Street to the N Street to 14th Avenue and from 12th Street to the

Mitz Freeway and the Estuary.

Other sources of potential local credits include Peralta College land purchases and clearance, \$1,700,000, and capital improvements by the city, \$755,000.

The approval of the GNRP

for Peralta Area

will have the effect of "banking" the credits on any such projects for eight years.

An additional \$2,027,000 in local credits for the Oakland Museum already is being used by the redevelopment agency in connection with the Peralta College Project.

The plan, as approved, recommends renewal treatment of Oakland's South Broadway area, including the sections of Madison Square, Chinatown and Old City; the Estuary area and a neighborhood east of the proposed college site known as East Peralta.

Approval of the GNRP was announced by John B. Williams, executive director of the redevelopment agency. Williams was notified of the approval by Richard G. Mitchell, assistant regional administrator for renewal assistance.

The announcement was the climax of a seven-month effort by the redevelopment agency to save credits in the 500-acre area.

The GNRP, financed by \$63,358 in federal money, was developed by a task force of representatives from the re-

development agency, the city planning, traffic, streets and engineering departments and architectural and economic consultants.

Completed ahead of schedule in May, the plan was approved at public hearings before the redevelopment agency and the Oakland City Council.

City Cuts

Back on ~~Oldland~~ Chinatown

1967
The City Council yesterday sharply trimmed the size of a Chinatown-Old City redevelopment project after Mayor John H. Reading by-passed the city's redevelopment agency to discover that a federal agency probably wouldn't approve it.

Reading reported his findings to the council later in the day and councilmen immediately rescinded a three-day-old resolution it adopted at the urging of John B. Williams, executive director of the City Redevelopment Agency.

Questioned by newsmen, the mayor agreed that the City Council had not received the full story on the project from Williams.

Reading also said that Richard Mitchell, regional director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's urban renewal program, had not been invited by Williams to attend a special meeting last Tuesday as requested by councilmen.

"Mitchell told me he would have attended such a meeting if invited," Reading said.

At that special meeting Tuesday, Williams told councilmen that federal officials were "not willing to come."

The mayor admitted he was concerned about the apparent discrepancy in stories but said, "I don't want to see this become a fight in the newspaper."

It was the second time this year that the City Council had

discrepancy in its office's budget, said, "I don't want to see this become a fight in the newspapers."

It was the second time this year that the City Council had to drastically reduce a redevelopment project proposed by Williams and his agency.

Earlier in the year, the council rescued the Peralta colleges' Lake Merritt campus project which depended on federal financial aid when HUD warned the city to trim a more ambitious program urged by Williams.

Last Tuesday, the council adopted a resolution which in effect expanded a 50-block Chinatown redevelopment project into an 84-block, \$22 million program which Williams said was necessary to capture credits toward the city's cash contribution.

Worried whether the expanded project would risk a desired Chinatown project, councilmen requested Reading to check personally with top regional HUD officials.

Reading met with Mitchell early yesterday morning and reported later that it was "questionable" whether HUD would back the larger project.

He said Mitchell recommended that the project be "condensed" to the "core" of Chinatown itself.

The rest of the Williams-proposed area appears wide open for private enterprise development, Reading said, particularly near the Oak Street headquarters for the Bay Area Rapid Transit District. That area, Reading said, was obviously open for privately-financed apartment houses and did not need governmental help.

Rescinding its previous resolution, the council adopted a new one ordering Williams to reduce the project's size to include just the downtown Chinatown area.

Chinatown Project

JUN - 6 1968

Takes a Big Step

The Oakland Redevelopment Agency took the first step yesterday to turn its \$35 million Chinatown Redevelopment project into a reality.

The agency, by unanimous vote, authorized application for \$1 million in planning funds to turn the Oakland Chinatown into one of the principal points of interest on the Pacific Coast.

The plan, already approved by the Oakland City Council, would be financed by a combination of federal funds and \$6 million in local credits provided by Bay Area Rapid Transit construction and other public improvements.

The proposal is the second for the area. A 1966 Chinatown application was withdrawn when federal funds were insufficient to meet its requirements.

Under yesterday's proposal a part of Oakland extending beyond Chinatown and known as the old town would be included.

Although there are a few irregularities in the perimeter, the project is generally included within a rectangle bounded by the Nimitz Freeway, Fallon Street, 10th Street and 11th Street and Castro Street.

The project will include new housing for low and moderate income families, a cultural center and restaurants and other attractions for tourists.

The agency, which anticipates that it will not need the full \$1 million sought for planning, expects to have this stage of the project completed with nine months.

A citizens committee of community residents will participate in the planning of the project, according to John B. Williams, executive director of the agency.

In the old town section of the project, that portion which lies west of Broadway, the Victorian character of the houses there will be retained, under present plans.

Campaign May Save Fund For Chinatown Renewal

JAN 7-1971

By BOB DISTEFANO
Tribune Staff Writer

The Oakland Redevelopment Agency has launched a campaign to save \$2.36 million in rapid transit credits for the proposed \$7.6 million Chinatown renewal project.

John B. Williams, Redevelopment Agency executive director, said yesterday that he will ask Rep. Ronald V. Dellums, D-Berkeley, to introduce legislation to extend the credits which will expire Feb. 1.

Outgoing Rep. Jeffery Cohen, D-Berkeley, set the stage in the waning days of the 91st Congress by introducing a bill which would have extended the credits.

The credits would go to pay the city's required local share of the Chinatown project and are generated by the construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District 12th Street Station. The 12th Street Station would serve the proposed Chinatown project bounded by 11th and 9th Streets, Broadway and Webster St.

Until recently Redevelopment Agency officials were hopeful that the Chinatown project would finally receive the federal nod but new federal guidelines suddenly changed the whole picture late last year.

George Romney, secretary of the U.S. Department of

Housing and Urban Development, announced rules which seek to spread urban renewal funds to cities not previously receiving grants. Those rules generally rule out new redevelopment projects in cities which already have urban renewal projects.

That has stalled the Chinatown proposal. James Price, area director of HUD, yesterday indicated that he looked favorably on the Redevelopment Agency's attempt to gain Congressional approval of an extension of BART credit expiration. But he could give no definite information on whether the Federal Government will finally fund the Chinatown project.

Williams argues that the

Oakland Chinatown proposal should not be considered new because in one form or another it has been submitted three other times beginning in 1966.

If the expiration date is not extended, Chinatown's local share will have to either be financed by cash contributions or by tapping BART credits already captured or to be captured in the future by the City Center downtown shopping center project.

City Center has already captured \$7.7 million in local shares from the 12th Street BART station. Chinatown project approval before Feb. 1 or with special legislation would capture another \$2.36 million from the same BART station.